

Letter to Council

January 18, 2013

Congregation Council
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
2515 Waugh Drive
Houston, TX 77006

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Part 1 **Access to Information Initiative**

Access to information is the cornerstone to good governance of any organization. It engenders transparency and meaningful participation by more members. I would like to see Grace Lutheran develop a culture of **easy access to all non-exempt material**.

Access must be balanced with protection of personal privacy and narrowly defined interests of the church. However, this *access to information initiative* only refers to non-exempt material. Exempt material is, as the name implies, exempt.

If people are concerned enough to become members of Grace Lutheran, and if they are good enough to support the church financially and in other ways, then they ought to be considered good enough to have quick and easy access to all non-exempt material. Even from a purely pragmatic standpoint, transparency is good.

A church should not allow its old documents to continue to rot and mildew when it is possible to digitize the documents at almost no cost to the church. Nor should it allow material that already exists in digital form to remain unorganized and inaccessible. It would be prudent to preserve digital material and take steps to see that it does not become lost or corrupted. Nobody should argue that this kind of non-exempt material should be withheld from any member of the congregation, yet this is taking place at Grace Lutheran.

Sharing information and being up front with church members affects their stewardship. Surely seminaries and the synod do not promote censorship of any non-exempt material. Please make this letter part of your next open business meeting.

Sincerely,

Charlie Dean

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